



Traffic Safety Outlook

Health Care/Injury Control



President Clinton's health care/injury control proposal calls for increased responsibility for health and safety. Further improvements in highway safety will assist in the national effort to reduce health care costs.

- ✦ About 40,000 people die in traffic crashes each year and five million are injured. Each day 107 people die from traffic crashes. (In comparison, about 25,000 murders and one million aggravated assaults occur each year.)
- ✦ Traffic crashes are the leading cause of death for people between the ages of six and 28.
- ✦ Motor vehicle crashes cost the nation \$137 billion annually, including \$14 billion in health care costs (\$3.7 billion of which is paid directly by taxpayers). The cost to employers is \$37 billion each year. A total of \$35,000 in health care costs is saved for each serious injury that is prevented. In comparison, crime of all sorts costs the nation \$19 billion each year.

Secretary of Transportation Federico Peña has set tough goals for increasing safety belt use and decreasing impaired driving; the two actions that hold the most promise of saving lives, preventing injuries, and reducing traffic-related health care and other economic costs.

- ✦ Secretary Peña has set a goal for the nation to reduce alcohol-related fatalities by 6,000 annually by the year 2005. Reaching this goal would save American taxpayers \$1.4 billion in health care costs (adding related injuries).
- ✦ He has also set a goal of increasing safety belt usage to 75 percent by 1997. Increasing seat belt usage in passenger cars alone to 75 percent would save 1,700 lives and many times that number of injuries. Health care costs would be reduced by \$684 million (\$180 million of which is publicly funded) and another \$328 million would be saved in income taxes and public assistance.

The Department of Transportation will meet Secretary Peña's highway safety/health and injury control goals by working with states, communities, and private organizations to encourage strict enforcement of state seat belt and anti-impaired driving laws, and through intense public information activities to alert Americans to the savings in lives and dollars that will accrue from these activities.



Seat Belts:
Lifesavers on our
Highways